

# Random Encounters

## Fharlanghn's Garden

By Stan!



### The Eternal Pilgrimage

Devout followers of every religion will occasionally make pilgrimages, and worshipers of Fharlanghn are no exception. In many religions, pilgrims travel to large temples dedicated to their god or to particular spots where the deity is said to have trod the earth, but the followers of the Dweller on the Horizon do not have such destinations.



Very few major temples are constructed in Fharlanghn's name -- every road, street, path, and country lane are testaments to his majesty. And the god of roads prefers to be worshiped at small shrines built along his domain so that the faithful may pay their respects and then return to their journeys. Anyone who sets out on a holy journey in Fharlanghn's name joins a tradition known as the Eternal Pilgrimage.

The Eternal Pilgrimage is a journey made for the simple sake of celebrating the bounty provided by the god of roads. The trip has no prescribed beginning, destination, direction, or even length -- it is simply an act of personal devotion and lasts as long as the individual pilgrim feels is appropriate. The only duties a pilgrim has on his journey is to be a pleasant to those with whom he shares the road and to help other travelers whenever and wherever possible.

To become a pilgrim on the Eternal Pilgrimage, the individual must first have prepared his or her body and mind for the journey. Each aspirant must spend an entire year walking outdoors for at least 8 hours a day before going on the Eternal Pilgrimage. An aspirant's travels during this period must not take any other form than walking, and he or she cannot pass by the same locale more than once each month. Once a person becomes a pilgrim, he or she must continue walking at least 8 hours each day, refrain from traveling by any other means, and avoid visiting a locale more than once a day.

Pilgrims offer to provide company to lonely wanderers -- it doesn't matter where they are headed because any destination is fine for the pilgrim. They are also always willing to share a campfire with strangers and offer food to anyone who looks hungry. They make it their business to become intimately familiar with the roads, towns, and customs in the areas through which they travel, and they can always aid anyone who is attempting an Intuit Direction or Knowledge (local) check (automatically providing the character with a +2 circumstance bonus to the roll). There is also a 40% chance that one of Fharlanghn's pilgrims can provide detailed knowledge of another, more distant location (their travels take them all over the map). Most pilgrims have information about 1d4 different regions, although particularly dedicated (and wide-ranging) pilgrims may have information about as many as 2d6 different locales.

Any adventurers who spend much time journeying from place to place soon come to recognize the gray robes and decorative walking sticks common to many on the Eternal Pilgrimage. They should soon realize that these pilgrims truly are good samaritans, and their offers of assistance and comfort can be accepted freely without fear of betrayal or incurring an unexpected debt.

From time to time, bandits, outlaws, and other disreputable sorts have taken advantage of the pilgrims' good reputation. They don the faithful's robes to outwit local constables and militia or, worse, to gain the trust of travelers and then rob or murder them in their sleep.

Whenever word of such activities reaches participants in the Eternal Pilgrimage, they set their paths toward the affected region, where they offer their assistance in capturing the perpetrators. Until the imposters are caught, they travel in pairs whenever possible and greet one another with quotes from sacred texts. (Those participating in seeking imposters are temporarily relieved of the requirements of their travels in terms of the Eternal Pilgrimage.)

Bandits who presume to use Fharlanghn's good name to hide their activities had better hope that representatives of the law find them before the pilgrims do. Many incidents of "rogue pilgrims" end suddenly. The robberies cease, but the only clue the local authorities find is a bloodstained set of gray robes hanging from a noose strung up in a roadside tree. The owner of the robe is never found, and the actual pilgrims all disappear, seemingly overnight.

#### Fharlanghn's Garden

Since those participating in the Eternal Pilgrimage are worshipers of Fharlanghn, adventurers may think to ask them for information about Journey's End or Fharlanghn's Garden. Most of the pilgrims (70%) honestly never have heard of any such place, although they say that it sounds marvelous and ask the adventurers for more details.

Other pilgrims (25%) say that they have heard stories about Journey's End, but that's all they are -- stories. They happily share these tales with the adventurers in exchange for their own rumors. About half of the rumors say that Fharlanghn's Garden lies in the middle of a vast desert. Other rumors place the garden in the heart of a fetid swamp, in land recently ravaged by earthquakes and volcanoes, nestled in a hot spring fed arctic valley, or as the only remaining habitable patch left after a devastating forest fire raged through the area. The two things that they all have in common are that Journey's End is located in an otherwise completely inhospitable location, and that the garden itself is the most beautiful, bountiful, idyllic patch of land in the world.

An extraordinarily small number of pilgrims (5%), though, respond to questions regarding Journey's End with silence and a cold, hard glare. If pressed, they say something enigmatic and ominous such as, "If Fharlanghn wanted visitors, he would place his front gate where all could see." Whatever the pilgrim says, the adventurers should clearly get two messages: that Journey's End is a real place, and that the pilgrim is certain that they are not welcome there.

### **Bringing the Parts Together**

The PCs may find themselves assisting pilgrims as they seek to end a local bandit's life. The bandit and her group have been emulating pilgrims near where the PCs are located, and now an influx of pilgrims has arrived to put a stop to the bandit group's deception. Do the PCs help the pilgrims?

### **Coming in Part 3 of Fharlanghn's Garden**

Next time you can view a prestige class for those who follow the path of Fharlanghn.

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[Return to Main Page](#)

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